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April 11, 2001

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The Honorable Michael K. Powell
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554Re: WT Docket No. 00-32

Dear Chairman Powell:

I am writing this memo to request your help in securing dedicated spectrum to address the needs of public safety throughout the County of Rockland. Rockland, as outlined in the 2000 United States Census, is the smallest County in New York State and the largest growing County, as there has been an increase of population size by 8%. It is triangular in shape and consists of approximately 176 square miles, situated on the West Bank of the Hudson River. Rockland's geographical center is just 33 miles north of New York City. Within 20 miles lie the Hudson River Valley to the north, Westchester County and Connecticut to the east, northern New Jersey to the south and Orange County to the west. Rockland is easily accessible by car from major roadways, such as the New York State Thruway (Interstate 287/87), Palisades Interstate Parkway, Garden State Parkway and Routes 9W, 17, and 202. This is a central location for law enforcement municipalities in other regions or Counties and as a result many public safety agencies are finding it difficult to obtain spectrum for their existing radios. Rockland contains a population of approximately 300,000 people with 11 law enforcement agencies operating within its borders. It is emerging as one of the more developed suburban counties in the New York Region. In addition, Rockland lies within the ten-mile evacuation area of the NYP-Indian Point nuclear facility. The NRC mandated evacuation plan is a complex process, critical to the safety of hundreds of thousands of residents, which requires extensive planning, cooperation and coordination. In 1996 the public safety communities determined that our primary existing radio systems were inadequate and do not provide sufficient radio coverage to carry out this plan. The need for 95 MHz of additional dedicated spectrum was identified in order to meet the communication needs over the next ten years.

Emerging technologies, such as cell phones to TV to wireless modems are competing for access. Thereby, significantly wider bandwidths are needed. Presently, the FCC has allocated just 24 MHz to public safety, thus leaving Department's like mine helpless to future potential disaster situations. Such inadequate spectrum is placing the citizens in grave danger as police, fire and medical personnel are the first and most critical responders to arrive on the scene at times of public crisis.



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Welcoming People for 200 Years

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The County's Wide Area Law Enforcement Systems are currently comprised of two distinct operations. Countywide Police is used by Local Police, Sheriff's Department, District Attorney's Office, Narcotics Task Force, Medical Examiner's Office, New York State Police, and the Mutual Aid Counties of Bergen and Westchester. This system is comprised of a single transmitter site. Due to the terrain of Rockland County, major portions of the County are left with poor to non-existent radio coverage. County Wide Channel One is the primary radio resource relied upon for inter-agency communications with Rockland. Day to day emergencies are coordinated on this channel, as are any serious events which cross jurisdictional boundaries (i.e. pursuits, wanted persons, bank robberies, etc.) Large-scale operations are also conducted utilizing this channel, such as search and rescue, helicopter operations, manhunts, evacuations and natural disasters. In addition, channel one provides the primary communication link for coordinating the disaster plans related to the Indian Point Nuclear Plant. This key communication channel has a direct bearing on faster response to the public and increased officer safety.

Channel two of the County's Law Enforcement system is used by the Rockland County Sheriff's Department for daily operations. This includes the Sheriff's Patrol and Jail Transport. This system, like the County-Wide Police system, relies on a single transmitter. This transmitter leaves 75% of the County without adequate radio coverage. Representatives from the various emergency service agencies, along with county highway department and mass transportation officials, have been working for several years to develop a comprehensive emergency communication system for the county. However, aging hardware and system design have made this process even more essential.

In May 2001, the FCC is expected to decide what to do with 50 MHz of spectrum in the 4.9 GHz band. It is of utmost importance that this available spectrum be considered for public safety and not for commercial use. As a law enforcement professional, who has given over 39 years of service to my community, it is crucial to the well being of our citizens to provide them with effective coordination of our public safety communication technology and initiatives.

We look forward to your consideration and determination of the dire need that exists for allocated public safety spectrum.

Thank you for your cooperation in the above.

Sincerely,



James F. Kralik
Sheriff

JFK/mm